

“The National Training Program: Is Anti-Terrorism Training for First Responders Efficient and Effective?”

**Subcommittee on Management, Integration, and Oversight;
&
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Science and Technology**

**Committee on Homeland Security
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Statement by:

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Mr. Chairmen, Ranking Members, Members of the Committee and my fellow colleagues:

I testify before this panel today as a member of the community who has played an active role in homeland defense issues well before there was a Department of Homeland Security. I currently serve as the Research Vice President at New Mexico Tech, which is one of our nation's leading explosives research institutions. Prior to becoming the Research Vice President, I was the Director of the University's Explosives Research Programs. During that time, I worked with others to initiate the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium (NDPC) to coordinate First Responder Training in the area of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and served as the chairman of the consortium from 2001 to 2005.

As a result of the Oklahoma City bombing, the NDPC was formerly recognized by the Administration and the Congress. This tragic event illustrated that first responders need additional preparation to deal with WMD. The NDPC was founded by incorporating the specific area of expertise in WMD of each member in the consortium. The consortium gives the government the best and brightest researchers from these top-notch research institutions.

The concept of the NDPC is simple: train the trainers. The Consortium enhances and underpins training programs at the national, state and local levels to prepare for and respond to events of terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction, including Biological, Nuclear/Radiological, Incendiary, Chemical and Explosive (BNICE) devices.

The first step taken by the NDPC was to develop courses to augment the basic training received by First Responders. Next the Consortium began to deliver these courses to the First Responder community, both on our campuses and in their home cities. In fact, since 1998 the Consortium has provided risk-based training to over 600 hundred thousand First Responders from all 50 States, the District of Columbia and the four US territories.

These courses were developed and reviewed in coordination with other federal agencies including the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department of Energy (DOE), the Emergency Management Institute (EMI), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the National Fire Academy (NFA) and the Public Health Service (PHS), among others, all selected by the Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP). This has resulted in courses that consistently receive strong, positive reviews from the First Responder Community.

Having been active over the past eight years, we have learned a number of important lessons, and I would like to discuss with you a few of our "lessons learned" since the formation of the NDPC.

The first lesson to be learned is that education is an important component of training. This is vastly different from military training that is designed to prepare war fighters for known threats and relies on predetermined courses of action. Enemy actions are anticipated and counter-measures are practiced during training. We must avoid a shortcoming of training for first

responders by only training them to respond to the last attack. Today's threats require more education than training. If first responders are educated to understand the possible threats and the ability of existing technology to deal with the threats, they have a better chance to modify their actions to address unforeseen attacks.

Further, the time available for the training of first responders is limited compared to that for war fighters. Currently, it is estimated that there are five million first responders that require various levels of counter-terrorist education. The vast majority of these students require only a short awareness course that can be provided at their place of work. The NDPC has developed and instituted a model that can be scaled up to address the need to train five million first responders and meet that challenge.

Second, First Responder programs need to focus on prevention, as well as response. Because of events like 9/11 and Oklahoma City, we tend to fixate on preparing First Responders to respond to an event. While this is an important mission for these programs, it should not be the only mission. First Responders are in the community every day and, if properly trained, have the ability to recognize potential terrorist activity. For example one First Responder that attended an NDPC course on explosive devices recognized the ingredients of a bomb during a routine call in New Jersey. Based on his findings, the FBI was called in and the tenant of the apartment was taken into custody. This simple act may have stopped a terrorist attack. First responders learn these things with hands-on training of the type they receive today from the NDPC. I believe that through education, other examples of interdiction have occurred and occur every day—at our ports, borders, within our cities and countryside.

Third, we must have consistent training standards to address our national training needs. It is vitally important that our First Responders in Miami have the same basic knowledge as our First Responders in Seattle. As we develop solutions to WMD problems it is essential that the entire country benefit. Firemen, police and EMS personnel need to have the same basic knowledge. First Responders need to plan and train together because they will be responding together. Consistency is best achieved via a single source of training.

Fourth, most of the training need is at the awareness level and can fit into current training programs that exist for the First Responder community as exemplified by those testifying with me today. The vast numbers and existing delivery mechanism for this group dictates that a large number of sources are best suited to deliver the required training. Hence the dilemma, to be effective you need to have one consistent message and to be efficient you need to have multiple sources delivering the message.

The Office ODP in conjunction with the NDPC, has developed a system that addresses this dilemma. NDPC courses are developed via a rigorous review process and are required to meet standards. Instructors are also reviewed and must meet the NDPC standards. Technical level courses are delivered by subject matter experts and train the trainer based. Courses at the awareness level are designed to be delivered in the field by the personnel that have taken the Technical level courses. This insures consistency while providing for multiple delivery sources.

It is my opinion the Nation can achieve First Responder training that is both effective and efficient by:

- 1) Establishing National standards for all First Responder programs;
- 2) Focusing training programs on both response and prevention;
- 3) Minimizing the number of delivery sources for technical level training; and
- 4) Maximizing the number of delivery sources for awareness level training.

At New Mexico Tech, we have been involved in supporting our nation's defense since World War II. At that time we helped develop the proximity fuse, which was used to defeat suicide bombers that were attacking our Pacific Fleet. We used technology to defeat suicide bombers 50 years ago and I am convinced that we can use technology to defeat them now. But developing the technology is only the first step. The technology will be useless if First Responders are not trained to use it. An efficient and effective anti-terrorism training program for First Responders will ensure that we maximize our country's resources to defend our homeland.

Thank you, I would be happy to address any questions the members may have on this important issue.